

O 071613Z JUL 08  
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5110  
INFO SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY HARARE  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS GABORONE 000553

DEPARTMENT FOR AF AND AF/S  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AU](#) [BC](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS REPORT

REF: GABORONE 547

11. The Botswana Observer Team in cooperation with the SADC Election Observer Mission (SEOM) has shared with the Embassy the official text of the statement of the Botswana Observer Team regarding the June 27, 2008 Zimbabwe Presidential run-off elections.

Begin Verbatim Botswana Observer Team Text:

On behalf of the Botswana Team that took part in the observation of the Zimbabwe Presidential run off elections I would like to start off by thanking the Government of Botswana for having given us the opportunity to be part of the SADC Election Observer Mission otherwise known as SEOM.

Due to time constraints what we are going to present here today is a brief summary of our report to the Botswana Government concerning our observations, findings, and conclusions as we saw the situation on the ground.

The main objective of our mission was to ensure that the Zimbabwe Presidential run-off elections were held in accordance with the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections. These principles constitute an essential tool for determining the validity, integrity and credibility of elections. The expectation was that at the end we should be able to make a determination as to whether or not the elections were free and fair. Briefly stated these principles are as follows:

- ? Full participation of the citizens and political process
- ? Freedom of association
- ? Political tolerance
- ? Equal opportunity for all political parties to access the state media
- ? Equal opportunity to exercise the right to vote and be voted for
- ? Independence of the judiciary and the impartiality of the electoral institutions, just to mention but a few

The team which represented Botswana was made up of 50 persons drawn from the three political parties represented in the National Assembly, Civic Bodies, Civil Servants and Academics.

I believe ladies and gentlemen as you can see the team is well represented in terms of gender balance, age and background. All in all, the SADC Observer Mission had 413 observers from 12 of the 14 SADC member states. You will note that the number was quite large compared to the number sent in the March 29 elections. The Government of Botswana also availed 8 vehicles to be used by the Mission. The increase in the number was to allow for a better coverage of the election process taking into account the nature of these elections. You will note with the benefit of hindsight ladies

and gentlemen, that this approach by Government has benefited both the Mission and SADC as well as all those concerned about the situation in Zimbabwe. Because of the numbers, we were able to cover all the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe and this gave us the opportunity to observe first hand what transpired during the run-up to the elections.

## OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

Coming to the observations and findings I will start with the campaign process.

### 1. CAMPAIGN PROCESS

In terms of the SADC principles, contesting parties are entitled to equitable access to the state controlled media. We however observed that the state media prominently featured ZANU-PF political advertisements and messages to the exclusion of MDC-T. In the few instances where reference was made to the MDC-T in the state media, the messages were ZANU-PF sponsored and intended to disparage, de-campaign and discredit the MDC-T. A case in point was a TV advertisement depicting Morgan Tsvangirai's head alongside those of some three known heads of state from the Western world and is entitled The Loser's Club. On inquiry by the observers as to why MDC-T was not covered, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission responded by saying ZBH which controls the state media declined to flight MDC advertisements on the basis that they were uncomfortable with the language used.

I will now move on to the observations we made under the right to vote and be voted for. Voting in Zimbabwe is in two ways, there is postal voting which is conducted some days prior to the actual voting day and the voting that takes place on polling day. Postal voting is intended for members of the disciplined forces, foreign missions and any other applicants whose nature of duty may take them away from their wards on polling day. Under postal voting ZEC informed the observers that in the March 29 elections 8000 people had applied for postal voting, but that in the Presidential run-off elections this number had increased to 64,000. The Observer Teams were however, not able to observe the postal voting process because information about it was not forthcoming from ZEC. Even where the Observer Teams got information about postal voting taking place they were denied access to the polling stations by the Commanders at the Police Stations where most of this postal voting was taking place. When the Observer Teams enquired about this with ZEC we were informed that it was within the discretion of the Commanding officers to either grant or refuse such authority. Worth noting however, was that the Observer Teams received reports that postal voting took place in the presence, and under the directions of Commanding Officers who instructed their juniors to vote for the ZANU-PF candidate or risk losing their jobs.

### 2. HOLDING OF RALLIES

The Team observed that the holding of rallies was a preserve of the ruling ZANU-PF, whilst the MDC-T political rallies were systematically disrupted by the ZANU-PF militia and youth. For instance, on Sunday 22nd June 2008, the Team witnessed first hand how a planned "star" rally organized by Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai was prevented from taking place by a group of youth wearing ZANU-PF regalia armed with sticks, stones and sjamboks. They chased and indiscriminately beat all the people in the vicinity of the venue where the rally was taking place. All this was done in full view of SADC observers including some members present here. Riot police passively witnessed these attacks making no attempts whatsoever to intervene. After completing their task these youth retreated to the ZANU-PF headquarters where they were treated to food.

Other incidents of politically motivated violence by the Team included the following:

People believed to be associated with the MDC-T party were subjected to severe beatings, harassment, torture, killings and general threats of violence. The Police also appeared not to be enforcing law and order, and the ZANU-PF youth and militia mounted illegal road blocks, forcing people to attend ZANU-PF rallies and had bases where they tortured perceived opponents under the guise of re-educating them. In contrast ZANU-PF supporters received the full

protection of the Police as their rallies were never disrupted nor did they report any incidents of harassment to the Observer Teams.

### 13. LACK OF RESPECT FOR THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

During the campaigns, the observer mission noted with concern the uncompromising positions adopted by the contesting political parties/candidates to accept the outcome of the electoral process. The MDC-T Presidential candidate Mr. Tsvangirai, on the one hand made it clear that he will not accept a win by ZANU-PF Presidential candidate, Mr. Mugabe, citing politically motivated violence among other things. On the other hand, ZANU-PF President Mr. Mugabe made it clear at most political rallies and meetings he addressed that he would not accept the outcome of the election if the MDC-T presidential candidate won. His reasons were also supported by the leadership of the party, the Military and Police Commanders.

### 14. POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The team observed high level of intimidation and politically motivated violence that escalated with the approach to the run-off elections leading to injuries to persons, internal and external displacements of people, abductions, loss of property, loss of lives, theft and looting. In short, the mayhem observed by the team had the effect of depriving the people of Zimbabwe of the opportunity to fully participate in the electoral process.

### 15. POLLING DAY VOTING

Generally speaking there was an apparently calm atmosphere on voting day. But beneath this calmness was a noticeable voter intimidation where voters were required to record the Serial Number on their ballot papers and later submit that information to functionaries of the ruling ZANU-PF. One actually came and asked where the serial number is. This was intended to induce some voters into believing that the information pertaining to how they voted would be accessible and used against them.

In some rural polling stations, Chiefs/Headmen were used to record the names of their subjects who were then required, against their will, to go and queue behind their chief/ headman on voting day and vote in a pre-determined sequence. In this way voters were made to believe that their voting patterns were capable of being verified as to whether they indeed voted for ZANU-PF. We noticed a high number of those who said they could not read and write and in such cases they were "assisted" by the Presiding Officers in the presence of two other Polling Officers and a Police officer.

### 16. WITHDRAWAL OF MR. MORGAN TSVANGIRAI FROM THE RACE

It is now common knowledge that on 22 June 2008 Mr. Tsvangirai announced his withdrawal from the Presidential race citing among other things the prevalence and escalating politically motivated violence. It is also common knowledge that ZEC did not accept his withdrawal from the elections arguing that it was not in accordance with the Zimbabwe electoral laws and regulations. The bottom line, however, is that for all intents and purposes the election effectively became a one-horse race, pitting Mr. Robert Mugabe against a nonparticipating Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai. It is worth noting, however, that even after Mr. Tsvangirai's withdrawal from the race the level of violence did not go down. Voter harassment and intimidation, beatings and displacements continued unabated.

### 17. HARASSMENT OF OBSERVERS

The Team noted that some Observers were subjected to harassment. On different occasions, some members of the Team were chased away from rallies addressed by ZANU-PF and prevented from carrying out their observer duties. In some instances, Observers were threatened with violence and instructed to leave such rallies. The Team was in particular singled out for harassment on account of perceptions that Botswana was anti-ZANU-PF.

### CONCLUSION

The level of intimidation and political violence that escalated with the approach of the June 27 Presidential run-off elections has been clearly catalogued. There were many victims of violence in the form of injuries, displacements, abductions, loss of property, and loss of lives. The atrocities have been corroborated and constitute the necessary evidence to conclude that the credibility and integrity of the election process was compromised.

Notwithstanding the apparent orderly conduct that prevailed on voting day, the entire election process was marred by a wave of violence. The Team therefore concludes that the Presidential run-off election was not free and fair and does not represent the will of the people of Zimbabwe.

End Verbatim Botswana Observer Team Text.

DROUIN